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Early English Magic and Medicine

By

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EARLY ENGLISH MAGIC AND MEDICINE

By Dr. CHARLES SINGER

Read January 28, 1920

The practice of the healing art during the centuries that intervened between the fall of Greek science and the rise of the experimental method is a topic from which even the professed historian of medicine has usually averted his gaze. The material is neither edifying nor attractive, while the discipline demanded of one who would investigate it is by no means inconsiderable. Nevertheless the field is not altogether barren, for it can be made to yield valuable information as to the character and direction of cultural streams, and it is perhaps especially productive in just those periods where our other sources of information are most meagre.

The history of medicine in this great stretch of time is sharply divided into two parts by an event of great importance for the development of the human intellect. That event is the arrival in the West of the Arabian learning, the remnant of Greek science that had dwelt in the Moslem world to find its way again to the Occident at a date which varied in different countries but which may roughly be placed at the twelfth century. It is with the pre-Arabian material only that we shall deal here, and to it we may attach the title of *Dark Age Medicine*. But it must be remembered that for medicine the *Dark Age* of our notation extends far beyond the limits usually assigned to that period by historians. So far as England is concerned some of its documents undoubtedly date from as late as the thirteenth century. After the first half of that century, however, material, other than pure folk-medicine, free from Arabian influence is distinctly rare.

The magical and medical practice of Early England has come down to us, in a fragmentary state it is true, by two channels, manuscripts and folk-lore. It is to the manuscripts that we shall here appeal, but in judging written matter produced by a barbarian people among

whom the Latin culture was diffusing itself from the shattered fragments of the Roman Empire, certain special precautions are necessary.

Firstly, we must resist the temptation of inferring the primitiveness or the reverse of any practice from the date of the manuscript in which it is found. The main agent in the spread of Southern culture among the English was the Church, and its instrument—for our purpose at least—the art of writing. Consider what happens when a savage tribe is converted under modern conditions to the religion of the ruling race. First Bible and Prayer Book are translated and these circulate among the earliest proselytes, who learn to read and write from devotional works. Later the purposes of Law and Commerce are subserved by the written language. But it is not until generations have passed and the art of writing has become far more familiar, that we expect to find the intimate relations of life expressing themselves through the new medium.

So with the documents of Early English origin. If we turn to an eighth-century writer such as Bede we are faced with purely ecclesiastical material, bearing hardly a trace of the heathenism of his father or grandfather and almost without any indication that the imported culture was a new thing in his part of the world. There is scarcely the mention of a heathen god or hero and practically no word of native magic. The works of Bede might have been written by a foreign missionary instead of by an Englishman, for any information as to native customs that they contain, while of native medicine there is not a particle though there are plenty of medical references. On the other hand such manuscripts as *Beowulf*, or, more important for our purpose, the *Lacnunga* (Harley 585) are not earlier than the eleventh century, and yet are full of the more primitive material. In spite of its late date the *Lacnunga* is our best source of the primitive medicine of this country untouched by Christian influence, and its compiler does not hesitate to name the northern gods, Woden and the Æsir, in the weaving of his spells. The attitude of the writer of the *Lacnunga* to this material is exhibited by the way in which such purely heathen paragraphs alternate with charms mentioning the sacred personages of Christian tradition. But of any understanding of the nature of the Christian religion he exhibits not a trace; for him the efficacy of Christ and Peter is wholly on a par with that of Woden and the Æsir. It is this intrusion of primitive elements into late documents and the full Christianization of much earlier records, that make it impossible to describe our material in the chronological order of the manuscripts.

But there is a second source of error against which we must guard. Magic—and all early medicine partakes largely of the nature of magic—is probably among all peoples and certainly among the Nordic races an essentially syncretic process. Of all forms of cultural influence magic passes most easily and most rapidly from people to people. Any object or process or person held in esteem by a superior class may easily acquire magical powers among those of lower culture. Quintus Serenus Samonicus, a Latin physician of the third century, advised as a remedy for quartan ague the placing of the fourth book of Homer's *Iliad* under the sufferer's head. But we may take a more modern and even more absurd instance of the ease and rapidity of the passage of exotic magical formulae. It is told of Justice Holt (1642–1710) that he led a wild youth, and that on one occasion finding himself near Oxford and without money he procured a week's lodging by pretending to charm away an ague from which his landlady's daughter was suffering. He scribbled a few words of Greek on a scrap of parchment that had been used as a label and, rolling it up, he directed that it should be bound to the girl's wrist and left there till she was well. Many years after, an old woman was brought before him charged with sorcery. The evidence showed that she professed to cure the fever-stricken by the application of a magic bit of parchment. Justice Holt examined the fragment and found it to be the very piece with which he had worked his miraculous cure many years before, for his own Greek words were still legible upon it. His lordship confessed and the woman, who was acquitted, was one of the last to be tried for witchcraft in this country. In the course of our discussion we shall encounter Greek periapts of this very sort in use among the Anglo-Saxons, but we must not infer from them any but a similar distant contact with the Greek originals.

There is yet a third special precaution needed, and this concerns the language of the documents. Early English magic and medicine have been investigated mainly by philologists, interested in the surviving material as specimens of literature in the Anglo-Saxon language but paying less attention to its sources and affinities. For our purposes, however, we shall have to neglect the linguistic distinction, for the actual language in which these documents have come down to us—English or Latin—is hardly more than an accident. The magic and medicine of Early England must be studied as a whole if we wish to learn something of the cultural factors that have gone to make up this remarkable system, or to gain a true picture of the attitude of the inhabitants of this country towards the healing art, before the arrival of that scholastic method and Arabian learning

which wrought nearly as great a mental revolution in the thirteenth, as the experimental method and scientific attitude in the seventeenth century.

Before we turn to the medico-magical material itself a word may be said concerning the men for whom it was written and by whom it was used. It is usually assumed that any documents that come to us from the Dark or Middle Ages must necessarily have been written by clerics, and it is certain that the most beautiful of the Early English medical manuscripts, including all the illuminated specimens, were prepared in monasteries. The texts of these illuminated manu-

Fig. 1. Durham Cathedral Library MS., Hunter 100. [Fo. 122.] Late Eleventh Century. A leech branding a patient who has just been shorn. Neither the leech nor his assistant are tonsured.

scripts are, however, copies, or at best little but translations, and the documents to which they go back were hardly, if at all, clericized or even Christianized. Moreover, there are certain works, such as the *Leech-book of Bald* and the *Lacnunga*, where the scribe himself may have been a layman, and this is emphasized by the frequent demand that certain ceremonies need the aid of a priest, a superfluous direction in a book intended only for monastic use. There is sufficient evidence to show that as early as the seventh century there were lay physicians in this country who were freely consulted by prominent ecclesiastics. Of the status and character of these leeches we know next to nothing, but we are tempted to fill the gap in our know-

ledge from the accounts of the hereditary physicians of the Welsh and Gaelic peoples.

In the illuminated Early English manuscripts there are a number of pictures in which a leech makes his appearance, and he is never represented as tonsured (Fig. 1). It is perhaps dangerous to draw a definite conclusion from this until the source and history

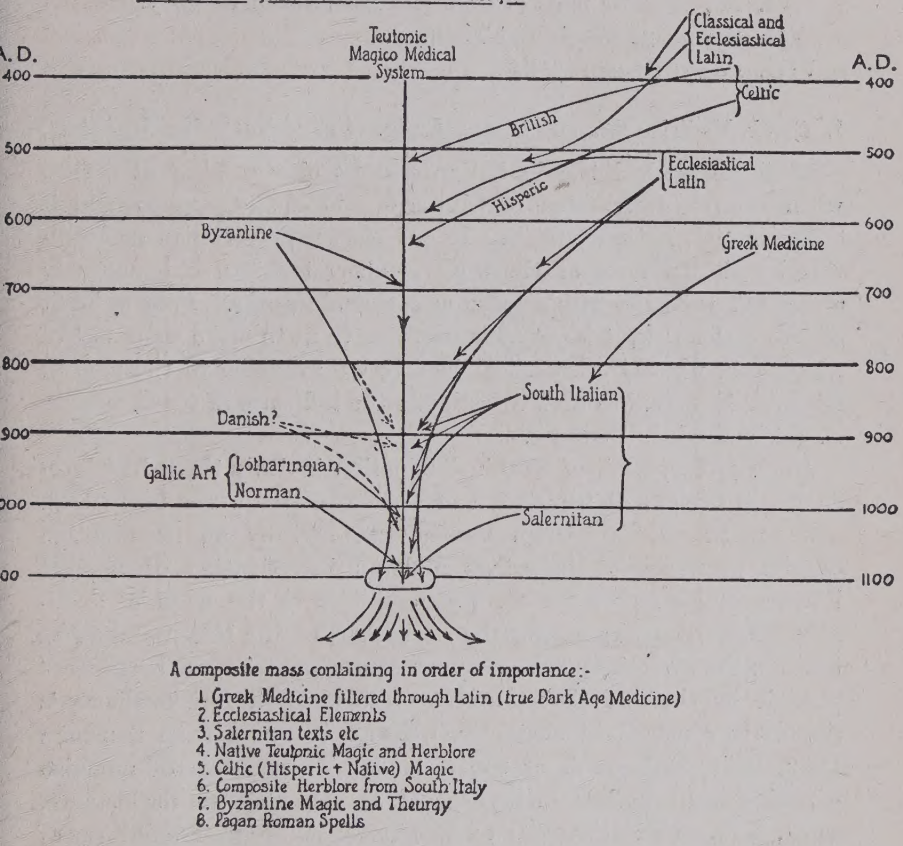

FIG. 2.

of these figures and the degree to which they were mere copies has been finally determined, but it is at least safe to say that the medical writings are less clericized than most Early English material.

The Anglo-Saxon medico-magical writings form a very composite mass in which a great variety of elements may be distinguished. These may be classed according to the degree to which they have influenced the material that has survived (Fig. 2).

I. Greek Medicine filtered through Latin. (True Dark Age Medicine.)
II. Ecclesiastical elements.
III. Salernitan texts.
IV. Native Teutonic Magic and Herb-lore.
V. Celtic Magic: (*a*) Native or Celto-Roman. (*b*) Hisperic.
VI. A composite mass of herb-lore from Southern Italy.
VII. Byzantine Magic and Theurgy.
VIII. Pagan Roman spells.

I. *Greek Medicine filtered through Latin.* (*True Dark Age Medicine.*)

Medicine reached the barbarian peoples of the West at a time when the scientific system of Greece was in complete decay, and it came through Latin channels. It was thus merely copied or traditional and had none of those living characteristics so honourably associated with the Hippocratic and Galenic works. Poor as most of this material is, it is yet of importance to us to make some sort of estimate of what Greek medical books were available to the men of the later Empire, in order to estimate the influence of Greek sources on Early English literature.

During the period of Gothic domination in Italy there had been an active process of translation of Greek medical works into Latin. Thus much we learn from Cassiodorus, and by an examination of the manuscripts themselves and an investigation of ancient library catalogues we can form a good idea of the material available for distribution among the barbarians of the North and West between the seventh and the eleventh centuries. The task is rendered possible by the fact that the characteristic Dark Age medicine is singularly constant in character, whether it comes from Southern Italy, Rhineland, Gaul, or Switzerland. This system of monkish medicine was practised in its entirety at such a centre, for instance, as St. Gall, where there was a whole range of hospital buildings of the nature and uses of which we have some record. It is only of very recent years, however, that the investigation of all this material has been seriously undertaken by medical historians. Their work is still incomplete and our survey—necessarily brief—must be regarded moreover as but provisional.

The medical writings of the Dark Age that are classical in origin may be classed under two headings:

(*a*) *Translations of Greek works into Latin.* Of these about sixty-four are known to have been in circulation in the Dark Ages.

Among the most popular—as shown by the number of surviving manuscripts—were the following:

Dioscorides (*circa* A.D. 60), *De materia medica.*

Galen (131–201)—sundry works, especially on urines and on fevers.

Oribasius (325–403), *De parabilibus medicamentis* (*ad Eunapium*).

Alexander of Tralles (525–605), *Therapeutica.*

Paul of Aegina (625–90), *Epitomae medicae.*

Of these writers the first two were Latinized at least as early as the fifth century, the last three probably not until the seventh or eighth, but it is the last three that had, in fact, most influence on the English material. Several works of Hippocrates, in wretched translations, were also known in Dark Age Europe, but they appear to have been less used than those we have enumerated, and there is no evidence that any work of Hippocrates was available to English writers.

(*b*) In addition to the actual translations from the Greek there were a number of *works written in Latin* during the late Empire which, though borrowing from Greek and under the influence of the decaying Greek tradition, were yet composed in the Latin language. These are mostly the work of Provincials, Barbarians, or Graeco-Italians, and are often admixed with local superstitions. Among the more popular were:

Pseudo-Dioscorides, *De herbis feminis* (sixth century ?).

Pseudo-Apuleius, *De herbis* (fourth century ?).

Sextus Placitus Papyrensis, *De Medicina ex Animalibus* (fourth century ?).

Marcellus Empiricus of Bordeaux, *De Medicamentis* (first half of fifth century).

Pseudo-Hippocratic Epistles (fourth century ?).

The general form of all these works was probably fixed between the fourth and the sixth centuries. Manuscripts written in England before the Arabian revival contain numerous quotations from all of them, and indeed they form the groundwork of Early English medicine. Here, too, may be placed the *Natural History* of Pliny and of his abstractor, Plinius Valerianus, which were available in England at an early date. From Bede and Alcuin onward, Pliny together with Isidore of Seville (560–636) provided the staple of such natural knowledge as was possessed by English writers.

Lastly, it may not be out of place to mention here the curious fact that in several passages the English material seems to show contact with Celsus. This writer was practically unknown in the Dark and Middle Ages, and his work as a whole was far too scientific to appeal

to a people in the cultural stage presented by the Anglo-Saxons. There is no manuscript of Celsus in this country; the contact, therefore, probably took place through some intermediary. The point would make an interesting topic for a separate research.

The medicine of the Dark Age derived from these works forms a fairly definite system and is easily traced. Its philosophical basis is the doctrine of the four elements and the four humours, a view which finds ample illustration in English manuscripts. In the belief of the men of the Dark Ages there was a close relation between the external and the internal world, the macrocosm and the microcosm, and so they discerned a parallel between the four ages of man and the four seasons, between the humours of the body and the solstices and equinoxes, between the four elements and the four cardinal points, and so on. Such a scheme is elaborated in a diagram drawn up by Byrhtferð of Ramsey (*c.* 1000), the commentator of Bede (Fig. 3). This diagram is remarkable for associating the initials of the four cardinal points (Arcton, Dysis, Anatole, Mesembrios) with the letters of the name ADAM to whom in the text the term *protoplast* is attached. The occurrence of this word is itself of interest since it is of liturgical origin and is found in the so-called *Sacramentarium Leonianum* (eighth century) and in the Mozarabic liturgy but is not encountered in liturgies of later Roman origin. It is therefore probable that the scheme which Byrhtferð introduces had arrived in England before the eighth century.

More noteworthy is a short passage that is probably the earliest medical text by an insular hand, a small ninth-century fragment consisting of three paragraphs or sentences in a manuscript now at Paris (Bibl. Nat. Lat. 11411). This manuscript was written at Echternach, a monastery founded by the Englishman Willibrord, the apostle of the Frisians (657–738), and to Echternach, for many generations after his death, English and Irish monks were wont to flock. The document itself is in the midst of an Hisperic text and exhibits undoubted Irish influence. All three paragraphs of this short text are taken from medical works known to have been in circulation during the Dark Ages and forming part of the characteristic medical system of that period. We will, however, here consider only the first paragraph, which may be translated thus:

'The device of the sphere of the philosopher Pythagoras, which Apollonius described, for the discovery of anything concerning the sick. "Thou shouldst determine the day of the week and of the moon (on which he fell sick) and (the numerical value) of his name according to the letters written below. Add them together and divide by thirty and

consider the remainder. Examine what is written below[1] and if it fall in the upper part he will live and do well, if below, he will die"' (Fig. 4).

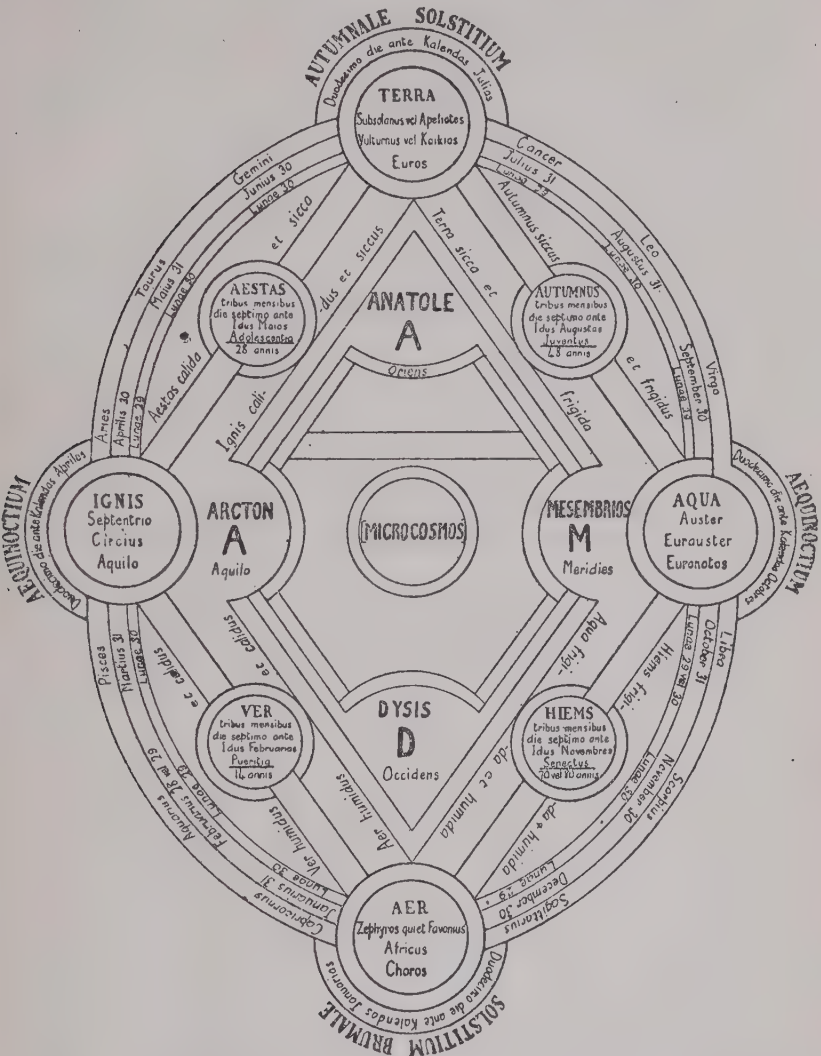

Fig. 3. Byrhtferð of Ramsey's Diagram of the Relations of Macrocosm and Microcosm. Redrawn from MS. St. John's College, Oxford, 17 (fo. 7 v.), written about 1110 but copied from an original of about 100 years earlier.

The sphere of Pythagoras is a recognized magical device. It is possibly of Egyptian origin but it certainly spread to Europe through

[1] The text has here *in spreta* which is meaningless. This may stand for a misinterpretation of some such abbreviated form as *īn s̄pta* or *īn sc'pta* for *infra scripta* or may be simply a misreading of the word *inscripta*.

Greek intermediaries. It is translated from Greek and is known in that language from a third-century papyrus (Leyden V) and in Latin from a large number of early manuscripts from the eighth century onward. During the Dark and Middle Ages this diagram is not uncommon in the English manuscripts, where it was variously attributed to Hippocrates, Democritus, Apuleius, Apollonius, Pythagoras, Columcille, Bede, Petosiris, Nechepso, and Plato, and quite a number of specimens are known dating from Anglo-Saxon times.

Why is this device so often repeated in the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts? We can obtain some answer from its associations. The

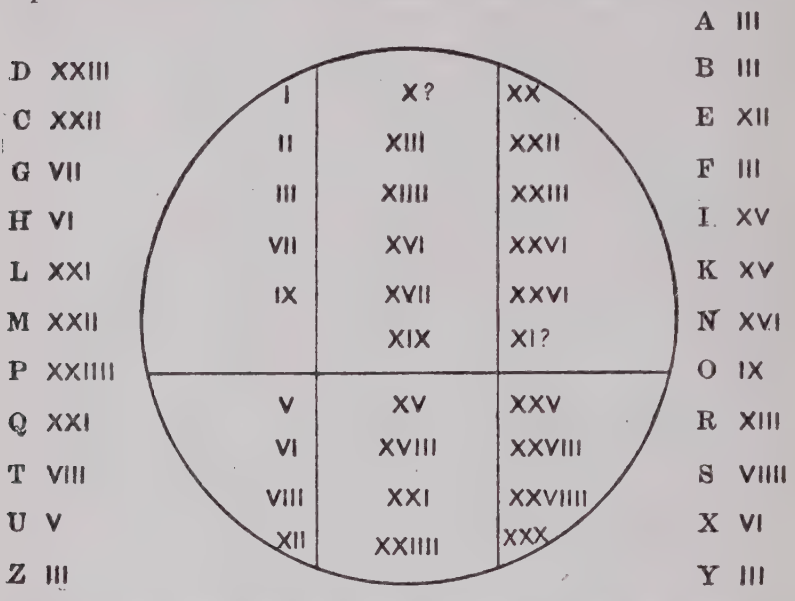

Fig. 4. The Sphere of Pythagoras according to Bibl. Nat. MS. Lat. 11411, fo. 99, written at the English Monastery of Echternach in the ninth century.

leech-books, whether written in monasteries or no, are, as we have seen, essentially lay products. But the earliest English specimens of magic spheres of Petosiris are nearly all in liturgical books and associated with blood-letting calendars. Thus the earliest, next to that of the Echternach MS., is in the Leofric Missal (970), and is attached to a venesection text and an apparatus for fixing the date of Church festivals (Fig. 5). It is thus probable that the magic sphere was employed in monasteries for determining whether venesection might be resorted to or no. Bleeding was periodically performed in these houses both as a regimen of health and as an aid in withstanding the lusts of the flesh.

But there is another association of the magic sphere. The Leofric Missal is a particularly diminutive specimen of its class. The original binding has disappeared, but similar small missals are sometimes provided with wide overlapping leather flaps so that the volume could be wrapped in them and carried through the wet without injury. Such missals were doubtless used in visiting the sick and the sphere would aid the priest in deciding whether to administer extreme unction.

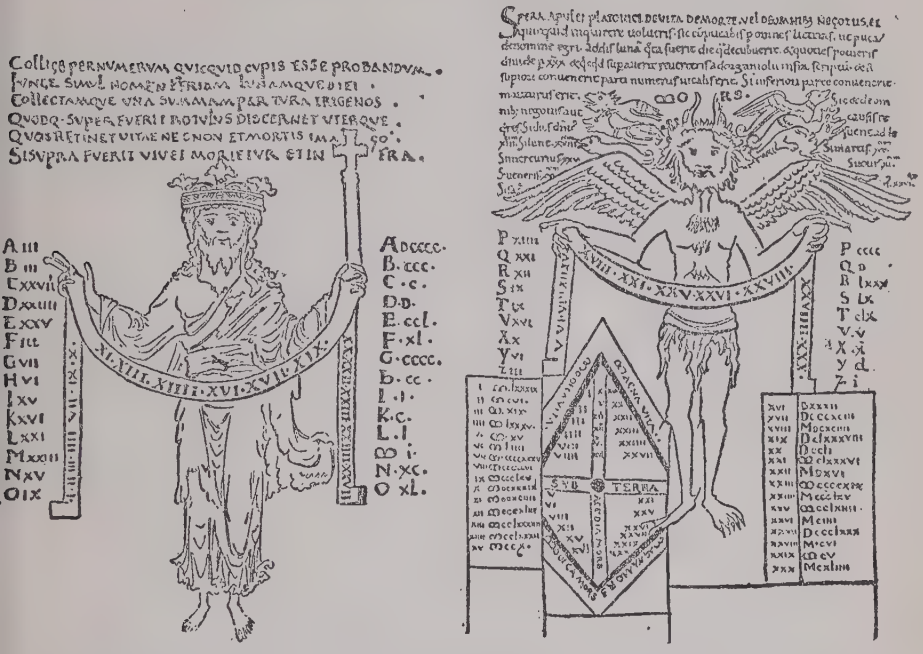

Fig. 5. Sphere of Apuleius. From the Leofric Missal (Bodl. MS. 718, fo. 50 v., and 51 r.) written at Glastonbury about the year 970.

II. *Ecclesiastical Elements*

Ecclesiastical elements are found throughout the whole corpus of Anglo-Saxon medicine and magic. Paternosters accompany every conceivable medical process. Such elements are perhaps the least interesting of the factors in AS. medicine, since they are known from many sources, are easily recognized, and still survive in folk-custom. One instance, however, is unusual and interesting as illustrating a non-Roman source.

In the Ecclesiastical History of Bede (written 731) it is related how John of Beverley, Bishop of Hexham, came to a monastery where a nun laboured under a grievous disease, having been lately bled in the arm.

While engaged in study she had been seized with a violent pain and her wound swelled so that she was now confined to bed and was sick unto death. The abbess begged the bishop that he would give her his blessing and touch her, for this she believed might aid her. The bishop then asked when the maiden had been bled, and being told that it was on the fourth day of the moon he said, 'You did very ill and unskilfully to bleed her on that day, for I remember that Archbishop Theodore of blessed memory said that bleeding at that time was very dangerous when the light of the moon and the tide of the ocean is increasing'. Nevertheless the blessing and touch of the good bishop restored her to health.

The 'blessed Theodore' was the Greek ecclesiastic who came to this country as Archbishop of Canterbury in 668. The doctrine that connected bleeding with the tides and the moon was a commonplace of Greek medicine and was certainly adopted at Rome. It is mentioned in the pseudo-Hippocratic epistle to Maecenas, but the supposed relation of the condition of the blood to the tides and moon is treated more fully in several works of the Galenic corpus, especially in the *Regimen in acute diseases* and the spurious treatise *On crises* from which Theodore more probably derived it. It is noteworthy that in the very early Celtic Calendar of Coligny the first half of the lunar month, that is to say, the days of the waxing moon, are all held to be unlucky.

III. *Salernitan Texts*

Salernitan texts, like ecclesiastical elements, are easily traced and therefore need only brief discussion. Of the early history of the medical school at Salerno our conceptions are still very indefinite, though the surviving early south Italian documents suggest that a knowledge of Greek medicine was widely diffused in what was once Magna Graecia in the seventh and eighth centuries, while hints from Cassiodorus carry us as far back as the sixth century. It would appear that in the ninth or tenth century this diffused medical knowledge began to be gathered together at several centres of which Monte Cassino and Salerno were the most important. At the monastery of Monte Cassino the process went no farther than copying and translating, but at Salerno by the late tenth century a definite lay medical school had arisen, and in the eleventh century a certain amount of genuine observation and investigation was being made. The great monument of that school, the Breslau codex containing no less than thirty-five separate medical treatises, has been edited, and reference to this enables

us to detect Salernitan influence where it occurs in early western medicine. One of the treatises in the Anglo-Saxon language, the so-called *Peri didaxeon*, is mainly a translation of the works of certain Salernitan writers of the eleventh century, while Latin medical works written in England in the early twelfth century may be traced to similar sources. The influence of the Salernitan school extended far beyond the period of which we treat and forms the basis not only of much modern English folk-medicine but also of the practice of the modern herbalist.

IV. *Native Teutonic Magic and Medicine*

Native Teutonic magic and medicine may be distinguished from imported elements of Classical, Ecclesiastical, or Salernitan origin by the presence of four characteristic elements: the doctrine of *specific venoms*, the doctrine of *the nines*, the doctrine of *the worm* as the cause of disease, and lastly the doctrine of *the elf-shot*.

We call such material 'Native Teutonic', but it might more fitly be termed Indo-Germanic, since these doctrines are to be found among all Indo-Germanic peoples and are encountered even in the Vedas. Yet when we meet these four doctrines in passages of English origin without classical or Celtic elements, and especially when combined with references to Nordic gods or customs, the material may with reasonable certainty be regarded as having been brought by the Anglo-Saxon tribes from their continental home.

Perhaps the best specimen of the Native Teutonic magic is the *Lay of the Nine Healing Herbs* of which the introductory passage may be given:

MS. Harley 585

[fo. 161 r.]	Ðas VIIII. ongan[1]	These nine attack
	wiþ nygon attrum	against nine venoms.
[fo. 161 v.]	✠ wyrm com snican	A worm came creeping
	toslat he man[2]	he tore asunder a man.
	ða genam woden	Then took Woden
	VIIII. wuldor tanas	nine magic twigs,
	sloh ða þa næddran	[&] then smote the serpent
	þæt he on VIIII. to-fleah	that he in nine [bits] dispersed.
[fo. 162 r.]	✠ nu magon þas VIIII. wyrta	Now these nine herbs have power

[1] Lines have been freely displaced from their original position in the text when the sense of the passage seemed to demand it.

[2] The text here reads: *to slat he nan.*

10	wiþ nygon wuldor ge-flogenum [1]	against nine magic outcasts [1]
	wiþ VIIII. attrum	against nine venoms
	7 wiþ nygon onflyg-num	& against nine flying things.
[fo. 160 r.]	[7 magon] wiþ þa laþan	[& have might] against the loathed things,
	þe geond lond fereð	that over land rove.
[fo. 162 r.]	wiþ ðy readan attre	(1) Against the red venom
16	wiþ ða runlan (?) attre	(2) against the runlan (?) venom
	wiþ ðy hwitan attre	(3) against the white venom
	wiþ ðy wedenan [2] attre	(4) against the blue [2] (?) venom
	wiþ ðy geolwan attre	(5) against the yellow venom
20	wiþ ðy grenan attre	(6) against the green venom
[fo. 162 v.]	wiþ ðy wonnan attre [3]	(7) against the dusky venom [3]
	wiþ ðy brunan attre	(8) against the brown venom
	wiþ ðy basewan attre.	(9) against the purple venom
	wiþ wyrm geblæd	(1) Against worm blast
25	wiþ wæter geblæd	(2) against water blast
	wiþ þorn geblæd	(3) against thorn blast
	wiþ þystel geblæd	(4) against thistle blast
	wiþ ys geblæd	(5) against ice blast
	wiþ attor geblæd	(6) against venom blast
30	. . . . .	(7) . . . . .
	. . . . .	(8) . . . . .
	. . . . .	(9) . . . . . [4]
	gif cume ænig attor	if any venom come
	eastan fleogan	flying from east
35	oððe ænig norðan cume	or any come from north
	[oððe ænig suðan] [5]	[or any from south] [5]
	oððe ænig westan	or any from west
	ofer werðeode [6]	over mankind. [6]
	ic ana wat ea rinnende	I alone know a running river
40	7 þa nygon nædram behealdað	& the nine serpents behold [it].
	motan ealla weoda	All weeds must
	nu wyrtum aspringan	now to herbs give way
[fo. 163 r.]	sæs toslupan	seas dissolve
	eal sealt wæter	[&] all salt water
45	ðonne ic þis attor	when I this venom
	of ðe geblawe	from thee blow.

[1] *Geflogenum* from *gefleon*, to flee, escape, i.e. presumably pariahs, outcasts, exiles, unclean things to be avoided.

[2] *Wedenan*, bluish (?), perhaps from *wad*, woad.

[3] After this line the text repeats *wiþ ðy wedenan attre.*

[4] We assume that three lines have here been lost.

[5] This line we have supplied. It is missing from the original text.

[6] Here follows a line 'crist stod ofer alde ængancundes', which we omit as a later Christian addition.

This passage contains three of the four elements of Teutonic folk-medicine though the fourth doctrine, the elf-shot, is not mentioned.

The opening verses (lines 1–8) tell of Woden warring with the serpent and how diseases arose from the fragments into which he smote the reptile. Woden smiting the serpent is a well-known Teutonic myth. In the mythical cycle Woden was primarily the dispenser of victory, but he was also the bringer of many other forms of good and especially of good luck and good health. This part of the poem thus resolves itself into a charm of that well-known type which consists in the relation in a few words, usually of verse, of the story of a cure performed by some sacred personage. A good example of such a charm invoking Woden is to be found in a tenth-century Old High German manuscript at Merseburg Cathedral in Saxony:

Phol ende Wôdan	Phol (*Balder*) and Woden
vuorun zi holza	fared to a wood;
dô wart demo Balderes	there was Balder's
volon sîn vuoz birenkit.	foal's foot sprained.
. . . . .	. . . . .
dô biguolen Wôdan	Then charmed Woden
so he wola conda	as well he knew (how)
sôse bênrenki	for bone sprain
sôse bluotrenki	for blood sprain
sôse lidirenki	for limb sprain.
bên zi bêna	Bone to bone
bluot zi bluoda	blood to blood
lid zi geliden	limb to limbs
sôse gelîmida sin.	as though they were glued.

This very charm is still used for sprains in the Northern Highlands where perhaps the Norsemen brought it. In the Gælic form, however, Christ has taken the place of Woden. The same charm is known also from other Indo-Germanic sources as, for instance, the Atharva Veda.

By the Romans Woden was early identified with the god Mercury whom he resembles in that from him proceed diseases and their cure. He also influenced the casting of lots as a means of bringing good luck. Now the word *tan* in the Lay of the Nine Healing Herbs which we have translated *twig* (line 6) is specifically a twig used in casting lots. 'Augury and Divination by lot', writes Tacitus of the Germans, 'no people practise more diligently. The use of the lots is simple. A little bough is cut from a fruit-bearing tree and cut into slips; these are distinguished by runes (*notis quibusdam*), and thrown casually and at random over a white cloth.' From the twig for casting lots, *tan* came to mean the *lot* itself. The nine twigs that Woden takes up must be these twigs of fate which are to bring a better lot to the sick man on recitation of the magic song.

Following the introduction of Woden and his magic twigs is a description of their powers (lines 9–32). The nine poisons or flying things are enumerated, and the nine diseases that they produce. The term *geblæd* which we have translated *blast*, but which might be rendered *blister*, is formed from *blæd*, a common term for a breath or spirit, and the description of disease as a blæd, blast, or blister is encountered not infrequently in Teutonic folk-lore. The wind, the results of which are manifest while the agent is invisible, bears an obvious analogy to disease. The *onfligene*, the *on flying things* (line 12), are the *venoms* which blow about in the air and reaching the surface of the body produce their characteristic diseases. They are repeatedly referred to in a refrain as 'the loathed things that rove through the land', a descriptive phrase also encountered in modern Danish charms. Thus the best translation both of *onfligen* and of *geblæd* would perhaps be *infection*.

After the nine venoms and the nine diseases comes a call addressed to the four quarters of heaven from which the four winds or blasts bring disease (lines 33–8). The division of the winds according to the four cardinal points is of Indo-Germanic origin developed independently of classical influence. The method of description of these winds is in contrast to the usual Greek and Latin system which gave special names to the various prevalent winds, a method more applicable to the regular Mediterranean climate with its periodic recurrence of winds from definite directions. The earliest Anglo-Saxon glosses from the eighth century onward contain the Greek names of winds taken probably from Plinius Valerianus, equated with the suitable geographical direction in terms of cardinal points.

The custom of uttering a charm against disease successively to the four cardinal points is also of Indo-Germanic origin and is found in the Atharva Veda. It occurs over and over again in Anglo-Saxon literature and is applied with both Christian and pagan invocations. The text we have given is obviously pagan, but there are others in the same manuscript which have become somewhat Christianized, thus:

MS. Harley 585, fo. 174 v.

Wiþ fleogendan attre asleah. IIII. scearpan on feower healfa mid æcenan brande geblodga ðone brand weorp on weg sing ðis on III	For flying venom, smite four strokes towards the four quarters with an oaken brand, make the brand bloody, throw away, [&] sing this thrice
✠ Matheus me ducaþ	Matthew leads me.
✠ marcus me conseruæþ	Mark preserves me.
✠ lucas me liberat	Luke frees me.
✠ iohannes me adiuuat	John aids me.

The Magic Lay continues with an obscure passage in which the disappearance of the disease appears to be compared to the process of being washed away by water (lines 39–44). The whole body of Anglo-Saxon medicine is full of such references to the use of water for curative and magical purposes.

In the last two lines that we have quoted from the Lay the venom is described as being *blown* away by the power of the incantation, this being an inversion of the process by which the flying things were blown on to the surface of the body. As the winds have blown the disease to the sufferer so will the magician by the might of his song blow it from him. The action of blowing is a common accompaniment of Nordic magic.

But there remains an English doctrine concerning disease, which we have not yet discussed, a belief which the English shared also with the continental Teutons and with the Celts. It would appear that the Teutonic peoples had not the belief in possession by demons which was so characteristic of the near East where Christianity took its rise. Nevertheless a large amount of disease was attributed not to occupation by, but to the action of supernatural beings, elves, Æsir, smiths or witches whose shafts fired at the sufferer produced his torments. Anglo-Saxon and even Middle English literature is replete with the notion of disease caused by the arrows of mischievous supernatural beings. This theory of disease we shall, for brevity, speak of as the *doctrine of the elf-shot.*

The Anglo-Saxon tribes placed these malicious elves everywhere, but especially in the wild uncultivated wastes where they loved to shoot at the passer-by. There were water-elves, too, perhaps identical with the Nixies of whom we learn so much from Celtic sources. Such creatures were perhaps personations of the deadly powers of marshes and waterlogged land. A water-elf is perhaps thought to have attacked one waterlogged with dropsy in the following passage:

MS. Royal 12 D. xvii, fo. 124 v.

Gif mon biþ on wæter ælf adle þonne beoþ him þa handnæglas wonne 7 þa eagan tearige 7 wile locian niþer.	If a man be in the water-elf disease then are the nails of his hand dusky and his eyes running and he will look downward.

and to prevent future attacks of the elf:

Sing þis manegum siþum. eorþe þe onbere eallum hire mihtum 7 mægenum. þas galdor mon mæg singan on wunde.	Sing this many times. *May Earth bear on thee with all her might and main.* This magic one may [also] sing on a wound.

The effort to bury the elf in the earth in order to prevent his attacks

has many parallels in folk-medicine. Thus in Denmark a whitlow is cured by thrusting the finger into the ground and leaving it for some time, and a sick child is lightly covered with earth; and in Holland, when a man has been struck by lightning—a form of elf-shot—he is interred as far as the neck to extract the evil. But a close parallel comes to us from a Latin source. Varro (i. 27) has preserved for us a Roman charm for gout or pain in the feet. The sufferer is to bow to the earth, to spit upon it, and to say thrice nine times the following charm:

Terra pestem teneto. salus hic maneto
O earth bear thou the pain. Health in my feet remain.

The doctrine of the elf-shot was, however, a view of disease that could hardly persist in its purity. On the one hand the shafts of the elves were so easily confounded with the 'flying venoms'. On the other hand the attacks of elves presented a close similarity to the constant assaults of demons and possession by them, from which the Christian ascetic suffered so sorely. In the later Anglo-Saxon material we therefore encounter a fusion of the ideas of demoniacal possession with the attacks of elves, witches, and other beings of the Teutonic mythology, and with the effects of flying venoms. But though the human patient tended to become possessed by demons rather than merely elf-shot, the elves continued to make their malignant attacks on the lesser creation, the cattle, whom the more self-respecting demons might be expected to regard as providing but a poor field for their accomplishments. Accordingly we find numerous references to elf-shot cattle.

MS. Royal 12 D. xvii, fo. 106

Gif hors ofscoten sie. Nim þonne *þæt* seax þe þæt hæfte sie fealo hryþeres horn 7 sien III ærene næglas ón. Writ þonne þam horse on þam hæfde foran cristes mæl þæt hit blede writ þonne on þam hricge cristes mæl . . . Nim þonne *þæt* winestre eare þurh sting swigende . . . genim ane girde sleah on *þæt* bæc þonne biþ *þæt* hors hal . . . Sy *þæt* ylfa þe him sie. þis him mæg to bote.

If a horse be shot. Take then a knife of which the handle is horn of a roan ox and on which are three brass nails. Inscribe then Christ's cross on the forehead of the horse so that it bleeds, then inscribe Christ's cross on the back. . . . Take then the left ear and prick it through silently . . . Take then a staff, smite (the horse) on the back, then is the horse whole. . . . Be the elf who he may, this has power as a remedy.

The process of pricking seems to have been specially efficacious for elf-shot cattle for we read of it repeatedly.

Distinction between Elements of Nordic and Greek Origin

These doctrines then, the doctrine of specific venoms, the doctrine of the worm, the doctrine of the nines, and the doctrine of the elf-

shot, separate Nordic or Teutonic from Greek or Byzantine medicine and all are encountered in the *Lacnunga*. But before we leave the distinction between Nordic medicine and the debased Greek or Byzantine system we may attempt a wider generalization.

Late Greek medicine is a combination of at least four more or less discordant elements:

(1) The purely scientific medicine which took its rise in the methods of the Ionian philosophers of the seventh century B. C., and was already far advanced by the time of Hippocrates in the fifth century B. C.

(2) Demoniac medicine inherited largely from the civilization of the Tigris and Euphrates. Babylonian-Assyrian medicine was based on the theory that disease was due to the entry of a demon into the patient's body; hence formulas for exorcism became of great importance. Moreover, what was bad for the demon must be good for the patient; hence arose the idea of nauseous drugs to disgust the demon and weary him of his habitat.

(3) Magic, a term which, while leaving undefined, we may provisionally regard as primitive unorganized belief as to the relation of cause and effect.

(4) 'Common-sense' empirical knowledge.

As Greek medicine decayed and passed into its Byzantine stage demoniac and magical elements became more prominent and scientific elements receded. This process, however, had not gone so far but that the Greek medicine distributed among barbarian peoples by the time of the break up of the Empire still contained traces of all four elements.

Now in true *native* Nordic medicine we can only expect elements (3) and (4), i. e. magic and empirical knowledge. In the mixture of Northern and Byzantine elements that has come down to us under the name of the Anglo-Saxon Leechdoms it will usually be possible to separate magical and empirical elements into the native and the foreign group.

As regards element (1), the true scientific medicine of Greek origin, we can say that it is never difficult to trace when elements of it are found embedded in a native medium. Concerning (2), demoniac medicine, the position is more complicated. Beside the original stratum of demonism in Greek medicine which was presumably drawn more directly from Babylonian sources, much new belief concerning demons had been introduced into the Greek system by Christianity, and had been propagated from an early date by the spread of that religion in the West. The pathology of the New Testament is mainly demonic and many of the miracles of healing are exorcisms. There were devils of blindness, dumbness, madness, and epilepsy, and Luke the physician regarded the 'great fever' of Simon's wife's mother in

the light of a demon, for Jesus, he says, 'stood over her and rebuked the fever; and it left her'. So also the infirmities of Mary Magdalene were of the nature of seven evil spirits—the demons of early Christianity, like those of the Mesopotamian system, were often grouped in sevens—and Peter considered that all those whom Jesus healed had been 'oppressed of the Devil'. The final end of disease is itself a demon's work since the inspirer of sin is indirectly the author of death, the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

So for the fathers of the Church disease was largely the work of demons. Of some importance for our purpose are the views of Irenaeus as preserving a record of that early Gallic Christianity which may be supposed to have first influenced the British Isles. He acknowledges the antiquity and effectiveness of exorcisms other than Christian and thus prepares us for the pagan survivals in our own deeply Christianized material. In writings of Anglo-Saxon origin we have to set off Christological protective charms, such as the *Lorica* prayer or liturgical exorcisms in the divine name of the *creaturae* of water, milk, honey, bread, oil, &c., of liturgical works, against the pagan spells of the Leechdoms.

Since exorcism proper, however, had no place in the Teutonic system, any protective charms, words of power, and exorcistic formulae designed to expel or to prevent the entrance of the demon, encountered in an Anglo-Saxon setting, must surely be of foreign origin though not necessarily of foreign form. We do encounter, however, Anglo-Saxon magical processes designed to remove the *materies morbi* projected into the body by supernatural beings, in other words formulae for the extraction of the elf-shot.

V. *Celtic Magic*

The Celtic influence in the Anglo-Saxon material is elusive and yet pervasive, but the difficulty of tracing it may be a result of the common heritage of the two cultures and the common external influences to which they were both subjected. Nevertheless, clear cases of the definite incursion of the Celtic magic into the Anglo-Saxon system can be adduced; these may be roughly classed according as they are derived from (*a*) Celtic magic proper or from (*b*) that form of Celtic magic which filters through the peculiar Hisperic medium.

(*a*) True Celtic magic in the Leechdoms is betrayed by a number of Celtic words and phrases used as charms. From such phrases, however, we can argue no intimate contact between the two peoples. A somewhat closer connexion is suggested, however, by the use of the

so-called 'Circle of Columcille'. The legend of the origin of this magical figure is contained in the Irish life of the Saint by Manus O'Donnell composed in 1532.

'On a time Ethne the mother of Columcille was in the place called Gartan, and it was the night before Columcille was born, and there appeared a fair youth in shining raiment, and he said she should bring forth on the morrow the son that was promised her to bear. And he told her there was a broad flagstone in the lake, to the south of the place where she was.... And he told her to let bring that flagstone to a certain place ... and that thereon should God will the child to be brought forth of her.

'"In what manner shall I get the flagstone, seeing it is under a lake", saith she, "or whereby shall I know it from other flagstones?"

'"Thou shalt find it floating on the bosom of the lake", saith he.

'And Ethne found the flagstone on the morrow as it had been told her, and she let bring it from the foresaid place. And albeit it floated on the surface of the lake, and Ethne's folk brought it away with them without labour, yet certain it is that it were a task for thirty men to bring it from the lake to the place where it is to-day....

'And it befell that the foresaid flagstone was under him at his birth, and the child rested him crosswise thereon, and the flagstone opened for him in such wise that it left a place for him therein. *And the figure of that cross is on that stone from that time to this day. And that flagstone remaineth in that place for working of marvels and wonders.*'

Irish archaeologists have frequently described a type of large flat stone, into the surface of which there has been cut in remote antiquity a design consisting primarily of a cross surrounded by a circle. A fine specimen of this type of Celtic monument is known from the glen to which Columcille's name is still attached (Fig. 6). To such stones magical powers were attached and their use passed over to the English. In an Anglo-Saxon manuscript of the eleventh century, over the figure of a circle with a cross inscribed within it (Fig. 7) we read:

MS. Cott. Vit. E. xviii, fo. 13 v.

Þis is sancte columcille circul Writ þisne circul mid þines cnifes orde on anum mealm stane 7 sleah ænne stacan on middan þam ymbhagan. 7 lege þone stane on uppan þan stacan þæt he beo eall under eorðan. butan þam gewritenan.	This is the circle of Saint Columcille. Inscribe this circle with the point of thy knife on a soft stone & strike a stake into the middle of the bee-enclosure, & lay the stone above the stake so that it is all under ground except that which is inscribed.

The stake was presumably to prevent the stone sinking and the

stone thus laid was used for charming bees, but its form and title betray its Irish affinities. In the manuscript, however, the resemblance to the circle of Petosiris has tempted the scribe to write the days of the moon upon it after the manner of the Greek device.

Columcille seems to have kept his hold on English magic. In a fifteenth-century English Book of Devotions is this charm, which surely plumbs the depths of foolishness and bad grammar: 'If a house

Fig. 6. Two Early Celtic Stone Crosses. Photographed by the late Mr. Romilly Allen in County Donegal. The cross to the left is in Glen Columcille, that to the right in a neighbouring glen.

is on fire stand between the part that is burning and the part that is not and say these verses and the fire will immediately flicker out:

Sancte columbkille
Remove mala flamma ille
Atque columbkillus
Preserve ab igne domus.'

(*b*) *Hisperic.* The literature of Hisperic origin is more easily traceable in the English manuscripts than the pure Celtic magic. This Hisperic literature is of so peculiar a character that we must devote a few lines to a general discussion of it.

For the last half-century philologists have been interested and puzzled by a most curious group of early documents of Irish or Eng-

lish origin. The longest of these and in many respects the most striking is a rough metrical composition known as the *Hisperica Famina*, a very peculiar work that has given its name to what is almost a special language and literature. The language of the *Hisperica Famina* appears at first sight to be merely clumsy and barbarous but syntactically simple Latin with one or two special constructions. But on examination it becomes apparent that while the form is Latin the vocabulary has been drawn from the most diverse sources, and the object of the writer was evidently to display his learning and to use the most out-of-the-way words. Under ordinary

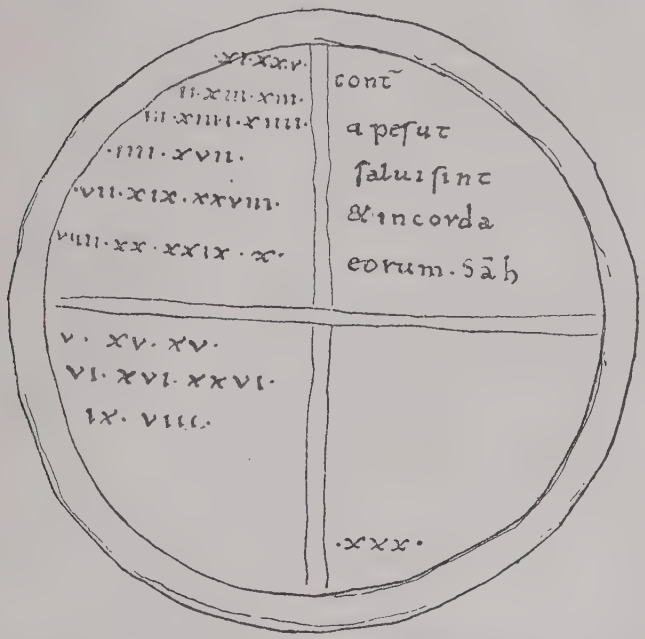

Fig. 7. The Circle of Columcille. From an Anglo-Saxon MS. of the eleventh century. (Cott. Vit. E. xviii, fo. 13 v., slightly restored.)

circumstances this would have led to nothing more noteworthy than bombastic inflation of style, but it so happened that the writer of this work and of the literature to which it has given its name had access to a number of oriental sources, among which were Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac. How these foreign words reached the West has not yet been made fully apparent, but it is not improbable that wandering Syrian traders played a part in the process.

An additional complexity is brought into the Hisperic problem by the fact that the Hisperic authors were men of Celtic speech who had access to Anglo-Saxon sources, and they did not hesitate to

introduce words of Celtic and English origin into their writings. Thus arose a jargon which was substantially a special language. The bounds in space and time within which this peculiar medium flourished are not altogether certain. The centre of activity was probably in Ireland, though Wales, Cornwall, and possibly even Brittany influenced the product. It was exclusively a literary language, and thus its influence extended from the Celtic peoples to the Anglo-Saxon monasteries which lay under a cultural debt to their more anciently Christianized neighbours.

The period during which the Hisperic language flourished can be roughly stated as the seventh century. It may have been practised for fifty or a hundred years before then, and there is one belated document—copied no doubt for its supposed magical value—of the sixteenth century. There is good evidence, however, that the language was still studied and understood in England as late as the tenth century, since Hisperic words are included in Anglo-Saxon glossaries of that period. The most important manuscripts of the literature are, however, of the eighth or ninth century, and they are mostly in the 'insular' script.

Certain Hisperic documents, and especially that known as the *Lorica of Gildas the Briton*, were used as charms by the Anglo-Saxon speaking tribes, and of the *Lorica* itself three copies of Anglo-Saxon workmanship have survived. The *Lorica* is in essence an incantation enumerating all the parts of the body in turn and calling down the blessing and protection of heaven on each, the whole being placed in the form of a passionate and somewhat unbalanced invocation. It is readily accessible and it would be superfluous to print it here. Such invocations shade off into the more ordinary liturgical material of the type encountered in the chapter, *De exorcizandis obsessis a daemonis*, of the *Rituale Romanum*. An intermediate stage, still betraying strong Celtic influence, is represented by the following conjuration uttered as a preservative against pestilence:

MS. Harley 585, fo. 191

In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti. Amen. N. In adiutorium sit salvator. N°. deo celi regi regum nos debemus reddere gratiarum actionem adque se petere ut a nobis lues isti huius pestis careat et in nobis quam donauit salus uera maneat iesu christe me. N° . . . ter rogamus audi preces famulorum famularumque tuarum domine iesu christe uite alta subueni auxilio et salutis tue pelta defende presidio summo et digne te obscuro intende ardiana mei cordis adque peto angelorum milia aut me. N°. saluent ac defendant doloris igniculo et potestate uariole ac protegat mortis a periculo . . . ne dimittas nos intrare in hanc pestilentiam sed saluare nos dignare

potentiam tuam filii dei uiui iesu christe qui es uite dominator miserere adque nos huius mundi saluator deus libera illam domine de languoribus pessimis et de periculis huius anni quia tu es saluator omnium christe qui regnas in secula fiat sanitas domini supreme. N°. amen. brigitarum dricillarum tuarum *malint uoarline dearnabda murde murrunice domur brio rubebroht.* S̄c̄ rehhoc. & s̄c̄ ehwalde. & s̄c̄ cassiane. & s̄c̄ germane. & s̄c̄ sigismundi regis gescyldað me wið ða laþan poccas 7 wið ealle yfelu. amen. [Saint Rehhoc, Saint Ehwald, Saint Cassian, Saint German, and Saint Sigmund the king protect me against the loathed pocks and against all ills. Amen.]

The italicized sentence is corrupt Irish and is said to contain the equivalent of *Immaculate Maid of Heaven, Mary of God.* The saints are mainly a Celtic group. *Brigita* is Bridget. *Sanctus Rehhoc* is the Celtic Rioc who is perhaps identical with Riaghail and Regulus the legendary founder of St. Andrews (? eighth century). *Sanctus Sigmundus rex* was the son of Gundebald, King of Burgundy; he was converted from Arianism in 515 and became king in 516. *Sanctus Germanus* (378?–428) was Bishop of Auxerre and missionary to Britain; he had a high reputation for his power over demons, and there are many Celtic stories of him. *Sanctus Cassianus* is perhaps the Alexandrian of that name who became Bishop of Autun, and died in 355. *Sanctus Ehwaldus* is probably one of the Hewalds (Edwald) 'two priests of the English nation who had long lived in Ireland for the sake of the eternal inheritance' (Bede); they were martyred in the seventh century.

VI. *Southern Plant-Lore*

Of all the elements in the Anglo-Saxon medical system, by far the most attractive is the plant-lore. The English were a people who early exhibited genuine power in the observation of nature and considerable artistic skill, but their achievements in these matters were greatly hampered by the respect paid by them to the written records of a higher civilization. Thus the Early English texts containing descriptions of plants are merely bad copies or worse translations of works which had existed in Latin dress from at least as early as the seventh century, and in these no new or original element can be detected. But when we turn to the figures with which these herbals are illustrated we are met with an entirely new and very interesting series of phenomena, no account of which has yet appeared. Indeed, the story of plant representation throughout early barbarian Europe is a peculiar and in many ways an isolated development which cannot easily be fitted into the general account of the history of art, and for this there is a special reason. Most expressions of the mediaeval artistic spirit were prepared only with

Fig. 8. From an Anglo-Saxon herbal written in England about the year 1000. (Cotton Vitellius, C. III.) The figure to the left (fo. 23 v.) is *Hyoscyamus reticulatus* (*Hennebelle* of the MS.), that to the right (fo. 28 r.) is *Aristolochia Clematitis* (*Smerowyrt* or *Herba aristolochia* of the MS.). Both are Mediterranean species unknown in this country and therefore must have been copied from a herbal of southern origin.

an eye to the emotions that they raised, but in the case of the illustrations to herbals there was a definite utilitarian object. The plants *had* to be recognized in order to be found by the herb-gatherer. Doubtless some of the herbals were of little use except as picture-books, but there are others which betray a real and continuous effort to imitate the shape and form of plants that must have lain before the artist as he painted them. Thus it is that some of these representations of plants attain a degree of realism and truth exhibited in no other department of mediaeval art.

The tradition of plant painting for herbals appears to have first arisen in the first century B.C. and largely perhaps in the work of the rhizotomist Cratevas. The classical method of plant representation thus introduced is illustrated, it is believed, by the two great Vienna manuscripts of Dioscorides of the sixth and seventh centuries. The drawings of the plants in these magnificent volumes are free and usually accurate, and the figures though almost certainly copied have been rendered with much faithfulness and skill. That remnants of the classical tradition lived on and survived the impact of the wave of Byzantine influence in Greek-speaking lands is made evident from a study of the Paris Nicander of the ninth (Bibl. Nat. Suppl. grec 247) and of the Smyrna Physiologus of the eleventh century.

It is often stated that the general tradition of plant illustration came to the West from the school represented by the Vienna manuscripts but the evidence for this is not clear, and certainly the early English herbals do not closely bear out this view. Dating from about the year 1000 we have a fine Anglo-Saxon herbal (Cott. Vit. C. III) with hundreds of illustrations fairly preserved and freely drawn with some trace of the classical tradition, and certainly under southern influence but bearing no close relation to the Viennese manuscripts. This manuscript, however, in spite of its free drawing shows little direct appeal to Nature. Its figures are in part at least copied, for some of them may be identified as Mediterranean species which are unknown in this country (Fig. 8). The drawings of this earliest English herbal present many curious conventions, some of which are worth closer study. These conventions were thrown off in the course of a few generations, and in a herbal prepared at St. Albans about 1120 (Bodley 130) we have good drawings of native plants copied from actual living models (Fig. 9). In herbals prepared later in the twelfth century this freedom disappears, and though there is an improvement in technical skill and in power of design (Ashmole 1431) there is a progressive loss in naturalistic treatment. The drawings are first drawn heavier (Ashmole 1462, and parts of Harley

1585) (Fig. 10), next provided with backgrounds (parts of Harley 1585), and lastly made diagrammatic and placed in frames (Sloane 1975) (Fig. 11), so that by the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the English style is replaced by the Norman, we have a series of gorgeous, elaborate, and beautifully painted plant designs which are admirable as decorations but bear little resemblance to the originals from which they were copied and less to Nature, at which the artist

Fig. 9. From Bodley 130, a MS. written at St. Albans about 1120. The figure to the left (fo. 37 v.) is described as *Sugeyethistell* or *Sowethistell*. It is a very good representation of the common *Sonchus oleraceus*. The figure to the right (fo. 33 v.) described as *Sawge* is probably a young plant of the Cowbane, *Cicuta virosa*.

never thought of glancing. This represents the last stage in the development of the characteristically English school of plant illustration, for by this time scholastic and Arabian influence had asserted itself and was beginning to modify profoundly all departments of medicine, including herb-lore and indirectly therefore plant illustration.

Fig. 10. From two MSS. written in England towards the end of the twelfth century. The figure to the left (Ashmole 1462, fo. 35 r.) is described as *erusca* or *wylde nep* and is our bramble, *Rubus fruticosus*. The figure to the right (Harley 1585, fo. 19 v.) is described as *symphoniaca* or *henebane* and is our *Hyoscyamus niger*.

VII. *Byzantine Magic and Theurgy.*

Instances of Byzantine theurgy occur scattered throughout Anglo-Saxon writings. Sometimes there is a use of Greek script in the writing of a word of power, but there is no case where such a charm

Fig. 11. From Sloane 1975. A MS. written in England (? at Winchester) early in the thirteenth century. The upper figure (fo. 24 v.) represents the strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*. The lower figure (fo. 31 r.) is a purely decorative design described as *Pereterion* but unrecognizable as any known plant.

clearly involves a knowledge of the Greek language. These charms are thus comparable to the piece of magic of Sir John Holt quoted above.

Among the most striking of these Byzantine tags is perhaps the curious charm used to stop intractable haemorrhage which is found in several eleventh- to twelfth-century manuscripts. This charm consisted of the following words, which had to be written on the part affected or else worn as a periapt:

Stomen calcos stomen meta fofu.

The sentence is merely a corrupted passage from the Greek Liturgy of St. Chrysostom:

στῶμεν καλῶς· στῶμεν μετὰ φόβου.

Let us stand seemly, let us stand in awe.

These words, coming in the most solemn part of the service before the elevation of the elements, would be regarded with special reverence, and thus easily pass over with magic significance into the practice of a people of lower culture. The phrase is still used as a charm by Macedonian peasants.

A second Greek liturgical passage put to an exoreistic use is encountered in an eighth-century English manuscript and runs as follows:

MS. Royal 2 A. xx, fo. 45 v.

Eulogumen . patera . cae yo . cae agion . pneuma . cae nym . cae ia . cae iseonas . nenon amin. adiuro te satanae diabulus *aelfae* . per dominum uiuum ac uerum . et per trementem diem iudicii ut refugiatur ab homine illo qui abeat hunc aepistolam scriptum secum in nomine dei patris et filii et spiritus sancti.

The Greek in this passage is an attempt to transliterate εὐλογοῦμεν πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων ἀμήν.

The italicized word *ælfa* is the *elf* who is equated with Satan.

The same manuscript gives us also a charm to arrest haemorrhage which yields us a hint as to the route by which such Greek liturgical material may have reached England. The charm runs as follows:

MS. Royal 2 A. xx, fo. 49 v.

Per illorum uenas cui siccato dominico lauante coniuro sta. . . . In nomine sanctae trinitatis atque omnium sanctorum ad sanguinem restringendum scribis hoc COMAPTA OCOΓMA CTYΓONTOEMA EKTYTOΠO + ... Beronice libera me de sanguinibus Deus Deus salutis meae AMICO CAPDINOPO ΦIΦIPON.

The underlined Greek words are the equivalent of στυγοῦν τὸ αἷμα ἐκ τοῦ τόπου. Beronice or Veronica is the traditional name of the woman who was healed of the issue of blood, and the herb Veronica, also called Betonica in the herbals, our Betony, was used to stop

haemorrhage. The gibberish Greek words are similar to words used for a like purpose by Marcellus Empiricus of Bordeaux.

Another instance of the importance attached to Greek words is yielded by the occurrence of the Greek script in some of the Anglo-Saxon specimens of the Circle of Petosiris (Fig. 12). These being used to foretell the life or death of the patient would easily become invested with a special solemn importance.

VIII. *Pagan Roman Spells.*

Lastly, it is interesting to observe that the Latin herbal being copied ultimately from Pagan Roman sources contained certain Pagan

Fig. 12. Circle of Petosiris with Greek Script. From MS. St. John's College, Oxford, 17 (fo. 8 r.), written at Ramsey about 1110.

Roman spells. It is natural that these should have existed, but it is very remarkable that they should have survived in their full and unexpurgated heathenism in a number of herbals of twelfth-century English workmanship. We terminate our discussion with a translation of one of these conjurations.

MS. Harley 1585, ff. 12 v.–13 r.

'Earth, divine goddess, Mother Nature, who generatest all things and bringest forth anew the sun which thou hast given to the nations; Guardian of sky and sea and of all gods and powers; through thy power all nature falls silent and then sinks in sleep. And again thou bringest back the light and chasest away night, and yet again thou

coverest us most securely with thy shades. Thou dost contain chaos infinite, yea and winds and showers and storms: thou sendest them out when thou wilt and causest the seas to roar; thou chasest away the sun and arousest the storm. Again when thou wilt thou sendest forth the joyous day and givest the nourishment of life with thy eternal surety; and when the soul departs to thee we return. Thou indeed art duly called great Mother of the gods; thou conquerest by thy divine name. Thou art the source of the strength of nations and of gods, without thee nothing can be brought to perfection or be born; thou art great, queen of the gods. Goddess! I adore thee as divine; I call upon thy name; be pleased to grant that which I ask thee, so shall I give thanks to thee, goddess, with due faith.

'Hear, I beseech thee, and be favourable to my prayer. Whatsoever herb thy power dost produce, give, I pray, with goodwill to all nations to save them and grant me this my medicine. Come to me with thy powers and howsoever I may use them may they have good success, and to whomsoever I may give them. Whatever thou dost grant, may it prosper. To thee all things return. Those who rightly receive these herbs from me, do thou make them whole, goddess, I beseech thee; I pray thee as a suppliant that by thy majesty thou grant this to me.

'Now I make intercession to you, all ye powers and herbs and to your majesty; ye whom earth, parent of all, hath produced and given as a medicine of health to all nations and hath put majesty upon you, be I pray you the greatest help to the human race. This I pray and beseech from you, be present here with your virtues, for she who created you hath herself promised that I may gather you with the goodwill of him on whom the art of medicine was bestowed, and grant for health's sake good medicine by grace of your powers.

'I pray, grant me through your virtue that whatsoe'er is wrought by me through you may have in all its powers a good and speedy effect and good success and that I may always be permitted with the favour of your majesty to gather you with my hands and to glean your fruits: so shall I give thanks to you in the name of that majesty which ordained your birth.'

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the version of the Bodleian MS. Rawlinson B. 514 by A. O'Keller and C. Schoepperle, Illinois, 1918. The figures from the Leofric Missal on p. 11 are not taken from the original which is now very faded, but, by permission, from the print in the edition of the Rev. F. E. Warren, Oxford, 1883. The figures of Celtic crosses on p. 22 have been redrawn from photographs in the Manuscript Collection of the British Museum, Additional 37547, no. 601 and no. 609.

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